DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 758 PS 028 006

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TITLE The Effect of Literacy Intervention in Preschool Children's Dramatic Play on Literacy Behaviors.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference of the Association for Childhood Education International (San Antonio, TX, April 7-10, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Behavior; Class Activities; *Dramatic Play; *Emergent Literacy; *Field Trips; Intervention; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education
IDENTIFIERS Play Learning

ABSTRACT

This study on the effect of participation in field trips as a literacy intervention in play investigated how preschool children incorporated the literacy behaviors emphasized during the field trips into their play activities. Authentic literacy materials were included in two dramatic play centers before and after 15 children participated in theme-related field trips. During the two field trips, the persons conducting the tours focused on the use of literacy in the workplace and on the literacy materials which had previously been incorporated into the dramatic play centers. Data were collected through analysis of videotaped literacy behaviors exhibited in dramatic play centers before and after the field trips. Although literacy behaviors in dramatic play did show an increase following the literacy-focused field trips, data analyses revealed no significant differences. (Author/EV)

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The Effect of Literacy Intervention in Preschool Children's Dramatic Play on Literacy Behaviors

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Presented
1999 ACEI International Conference
San Antonio, Texas
April 7-10, 1999

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The Effect of Literacy Intervention in Preschool Children's Dramatic Play on Literacy Behaviors

Abstract

This study of the effect of participation in field trips as a literacy intervention in play investigated how preschool children incorporated the literacy behaviors emphasized during the field trips into their play activities. Authentic literacy materials were included in two dramatic play centers before and after the children participated in theme-related field trips. During the two field trips, the persons conducting the tours focused on the use of literacy in the workplace and on the literacy materials which had previously been incorporated into the dramatic play centers. Data were collected through videotape analyses of literacy behaviors exhibited in dramatic play centers before and after the field trips. Literacy behaviors in dramatic play did show an increase following the literacy focused field trips; however, data analyses revealed no significant differences. Field trip intervention adds to the type of literacy interventions in children's dramatic play, and with further study, might provide an additional impetus for preschool field trips and for enhancing literacy behaviors.

The Effect of Literacy Intervention in Preschool Children's Dramatic Play on Literacy Behaviors

Play is a fundamental part of the lives of preschool children and an important context for learning about literacy (Nielsen & Monson, 1996). Research has demonstrated that manipulation of the preschool play environment can affect children's engagement in literacy behaviors (Morrow, 1990, Morrow & Rand, 1991; Newman & Roskso, 1990). These manipulations of the preschool play environment have typically been limited to: (1) the introduction of theme-related literacy props into dramatic play areas and (2) literacy props combined with teacher involvement in the play to promote literacy behaviors (Christie & Enz, 1992; Morrow & Rand, 1991; Vukelich, 1991). These interventions have shown some mixed results. Vukelich's (1991) study found that children exhibited more literacy behaviors in enriched play settings before teacher intervention was included. Christie and Enz (1992) and Morrow and Rand (1991) both found that adult involvement was more effective in getting children to incorporate literacy behaviors into their sociodramatic play than simply the introduction of theme related literacy props without teacher intervention.

Literacy learning theorists emphasize the importance of the child's involvement in experiences. Vygotsky(1978) suggested that learning occurs due to the social interaction between a child and an adult or a more literate peer. Much of this interaction occurs between the child's teacher and/or the child's parent(s). Sometimes

this interaction occurs when knowledgeable adults share their expertise with children during field trips or forays into the community. Field trips are a common experience in the preschool curriculum but their goal typically has not been the emphasis of literacy behaviors. This study utilized field trips as a means for emphasizing literacy behaviors necessary for community members to accomplish their jobs. It was hypothesized that participation in field trips emphasizing literacy would increase preschoolers' literacy behaviors during subsequent dramatic play utilizing the theme of the field trip.

Method

Participants

The subjects for this study were fifteen children (5 girls, 10 boys) in a multi-age, half-day classroom at a southeastern college laboratory preschool. The children ranged in age from three to five years and consisted of the entire population of one classroom. Some diversity was represented in the children's ethnic backgrounds. There were four Hispanic children, one African American child, and ten EuroAmerican children. The preschool enrollment criteria required the parents of the children to be enrolled in or employed by the college. Children were from middle and upper middle socioeconomic status families. All parents signed release forms allowing their children to participate in the study.

Design and Procedure

The 15 children were assigned to three play groups consisting of five children in each group using a stratified random sampling to balance age and gender. The intervention occurred over a two-week period. The sequence for each week was that on day one of each week, children were introduced to community helpers that corresponded to that week's theme. This was done during the classroom group time and prior to participation in the dramatic play center. The teachers presented the jobs and tools of the community helpers of that week's theme through books, pictures, objects, and activities. Following the large group time, the three play groups of children rotated into the literacy enhanced dramatic play center. On the second day the children went on a field trip which emphasized the use of literacy materials and on the third day the children again participated in the dramatic play center.

The dramatic play center was set up to resemble a dentist's office during the first week and a flower shop the second week. The field trips on the second day of each week corresponded with the themes of the dramatic play centers. The persons conducting the tours for the field trips at each site were approached in advance and asked to emphasize their use of literacy on the job and to accentuate the forms and materials used in their literacy behaviors. Each field trip site was visited by the teachers prior to the field trip to obtain copies of their forms and other literacy

materials. These materials were incorporated in the dramatic play centers on days one and three of each week.

On the first and third days of each week the three play groups participated in the dramatic play center for fifteen minutes on a rotational basis. These play sessions were videotaped. No attempt was made by teachers to encourage children to use the materials in the dramatic play centers. Teachers only intervened in the children's play to correct inappropriate behavior, i.e. preventing the destruction of materials, mediating disputes, or stopping hurtful behaviors toward one another. While one group was participating in the dramatic play center, the other two groups were participating in centers such as art or cooking designed by the classroom teachers.

Materials

For each theme the classroom housekeeping center was transformed to make the center resemble the site of the field trip. Several of Newman and Roskos' (1990) principles were applied in the arrangement of the dramatic play area and in the selection of literacy materials. First, several pieces of furniture were used to delineate the dramatic play area from the other play areas. Second, literacy materials and tools common to the authentic setting in the world were also inserted into each play setting.

For the dentist office, a reclining outdoor lounge chair was added to approximate the examining chair. A nearby table held several dental instruments including rubber gloves, a mask, a small mirror, dental floss, and toothbrushes. A large set of teeth and

a toothbrush used for demonstrating proper dental hygiene were provided on one of the shelves. File folders containing charts, sign-in sheets, and pencils were available near the examination chair. In addition, a table was furnished as the receptionist's desk containing an appointment book, appointment cards, a sign-in sheet, insurance forms, pencils, pens, and a telephone. The sofa and coffee table were set up with magazines to simulate the waiting area.

To transform the housekeeping center into a flower shop, silk flowers, ribbon, tape, child-size scissors, vases, and styrofoam were placed on a small designer's table. A cashier's table was set up with a toy cash register, receipts/order forms, pencils, pens, floral pamphlets, gift cards, and a telephone. Arrangements of silk flowers were placed on shelves and tables.

All materials were identical for the three play groups and for the play sessions before and after the field trips. A videocamera was set up on a tripod outside the play area to record children's play/literacy behaviors. Children's activities had been videotaped throughout the year, and children were accustomed to this type activity. They did not perceive videotaping as unusual or intrusive.

Scoring

The videotapes for each of the play sessions were assessed by marking literacy behaviors exhibited at ten-second intervals. If several children exhibited literacy

behaviors simultaneously, marks were recorded for each child observed. The videotapes were analyzed for evidence of literacy demonstrations using the same definitions employed by Neuman and Roskos (1990). These were defined as instances of reading or writing-like behaviors. Such examples included scribbling, marking on paper (see appendix for examples of marking/scribbling behaviors), pretending to read, book/magazine handling, or attending to print. Literacy materials were defined as paper, pencils, pens, pads, charts, pamphlets, magazines, gift cards, magazines, and all other printed materials.

Analysis

To analyze the data, *t* tests for dependent samples were employed . The three play groups were analyzed to obtain a literacy score for each group prior to the field trip and a score for literacy behavior following the field trip for the two dramatic play themes: dentist and florist.

Analysis revealed no significant differences between literacy behaviors before and after the field trips . Though increases occurred in all but one group, the increase in literacy behavior was not great enough to reach significance. For the dentist, the t =1.99. Analysis of the literacy behaviors demonstrated before and after visiting the florist yielded a t = .50. With df = 2, the t test did not reach significance at the .05 level.

Difference of Scores Before and After Treatment, Dentist

***t* = 1.99, *df* = 2, *p* >.05**

GROUP	BEFORE	AFTER	DIFFERENCE
1	32	44	12
2	1	20	19
3	0	22	22

Difference of Scores Before and After Treatment, Florist

***t* = .50, *df* = 2, *p* >.05**

GROUP	BEFORE	AFTER	DIFFERENCE
1	70	29	-26
2	50	78	28
3	14	38	24

Discussion

With the exception of one group, the difference between literacy behaviors before and after the field trip to the dentist were greater than the differences observed in literacy behaviors before and after the florist. Perhaps the first field trip to the dentist

made children so aware of literacy behaviors that they were able to transfer this experience to the new setting of the florist.

The sample for this study was small which would make it difficult for a significant difference to occur. Replication of this study using a larger sample might have merit in expanding what is known about ways adults can encourage literacy behaviors in young children.

This study adds another form of literacy intervention which can be incorporated into preschool play. Field trips have long been a part of the curriculum of the preschool but the major purpose has been to expose children to real life experiences. This research could provide the impetus for classroom teachers to make certain that field trips also include a literacy focus as well.

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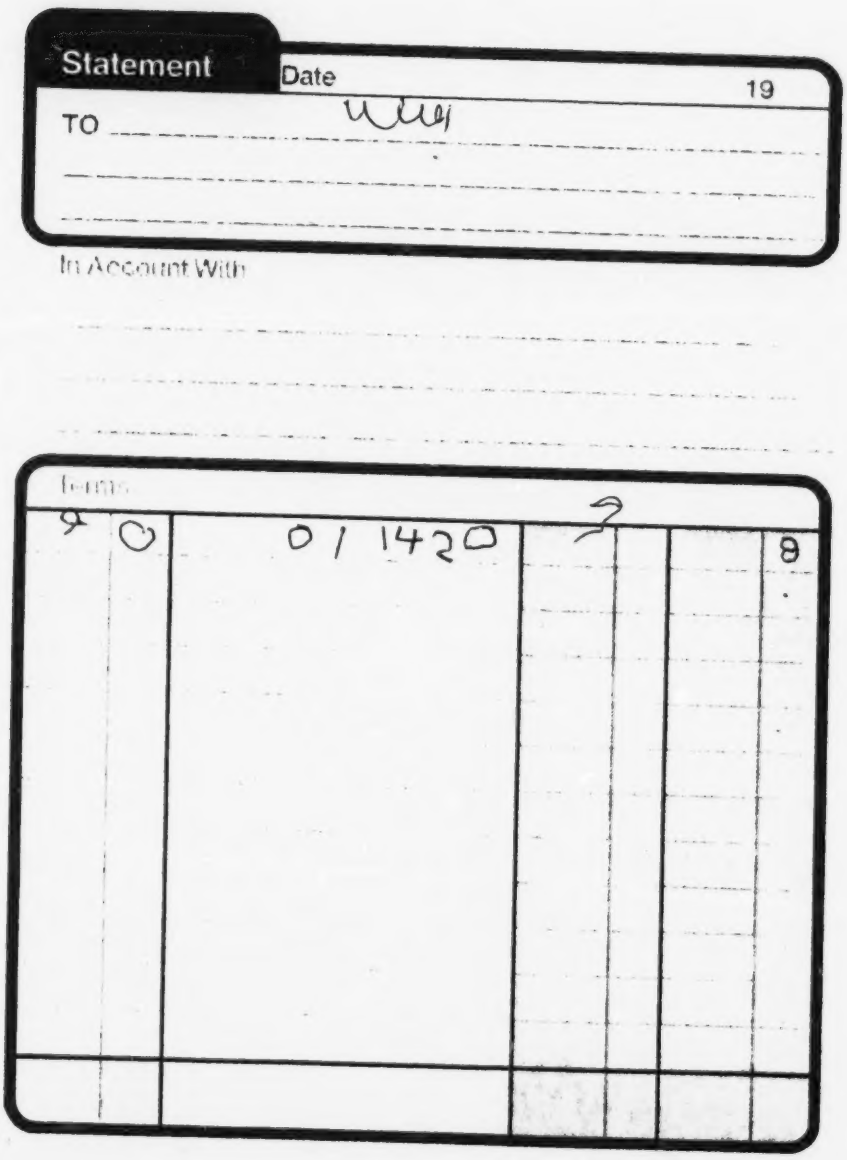
Appendix

Samples of Children's Written Literacy Behaviors



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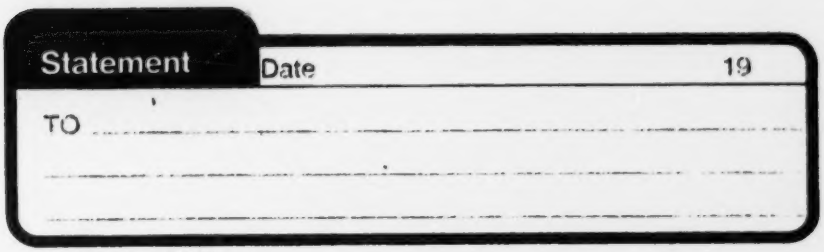

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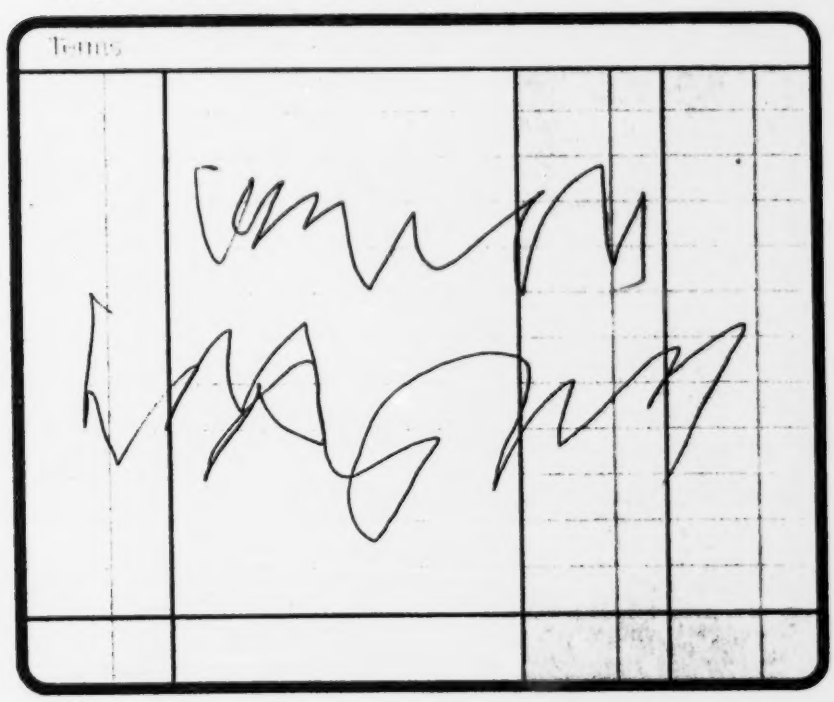

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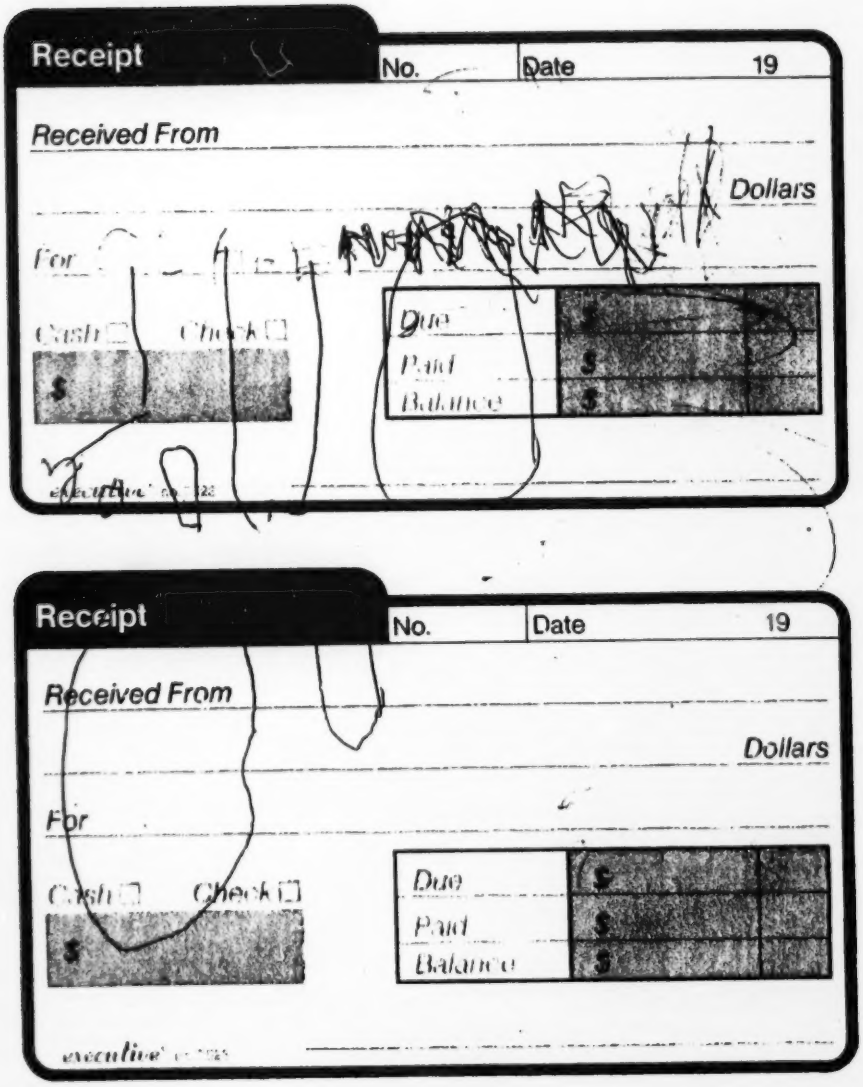

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Name _____ Residence Phone _____

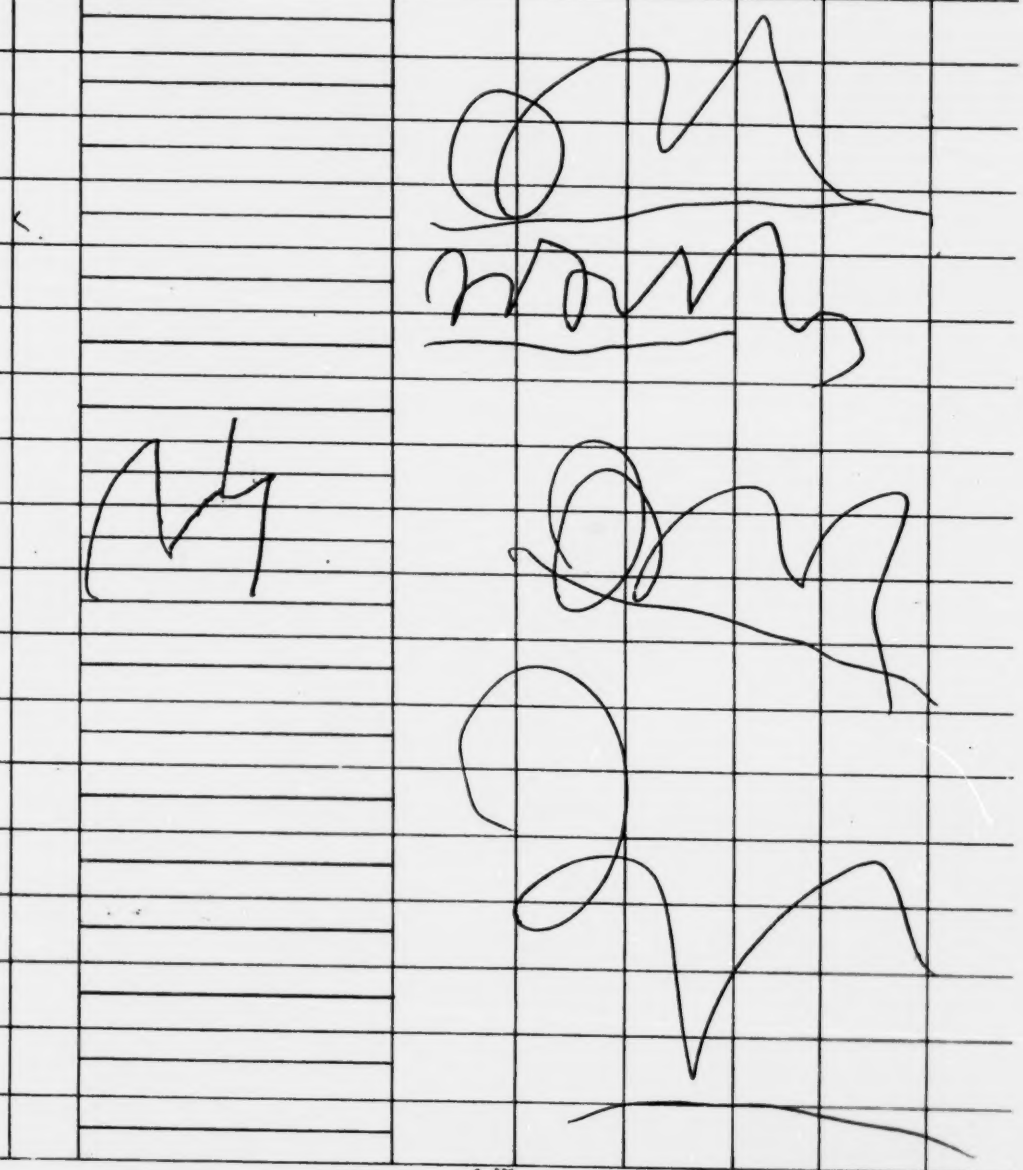
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Business Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Business Phone _____ Parent or Guardian _____

Insured by _____ Social Security No. _____

Proc. No.	Date	Control Name / Name of Patient	Services Rendered	Charges	Payments	Adj.	Current Balance	Prior Balance



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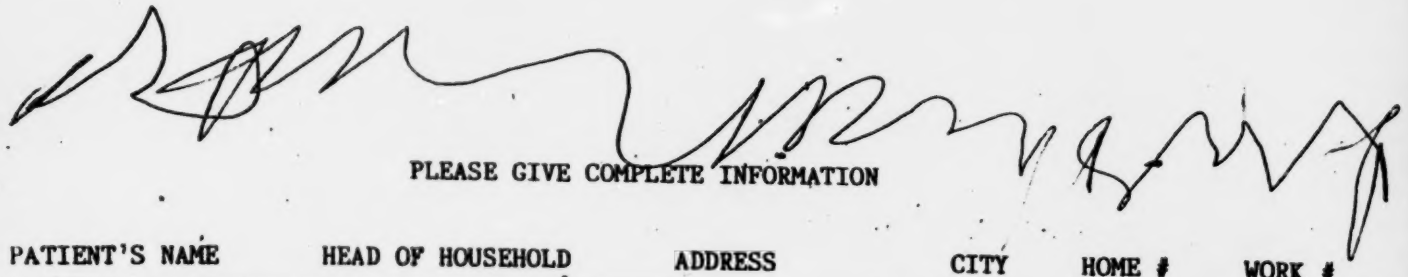

PLEASE GIVE COMPLETE INFORMATION

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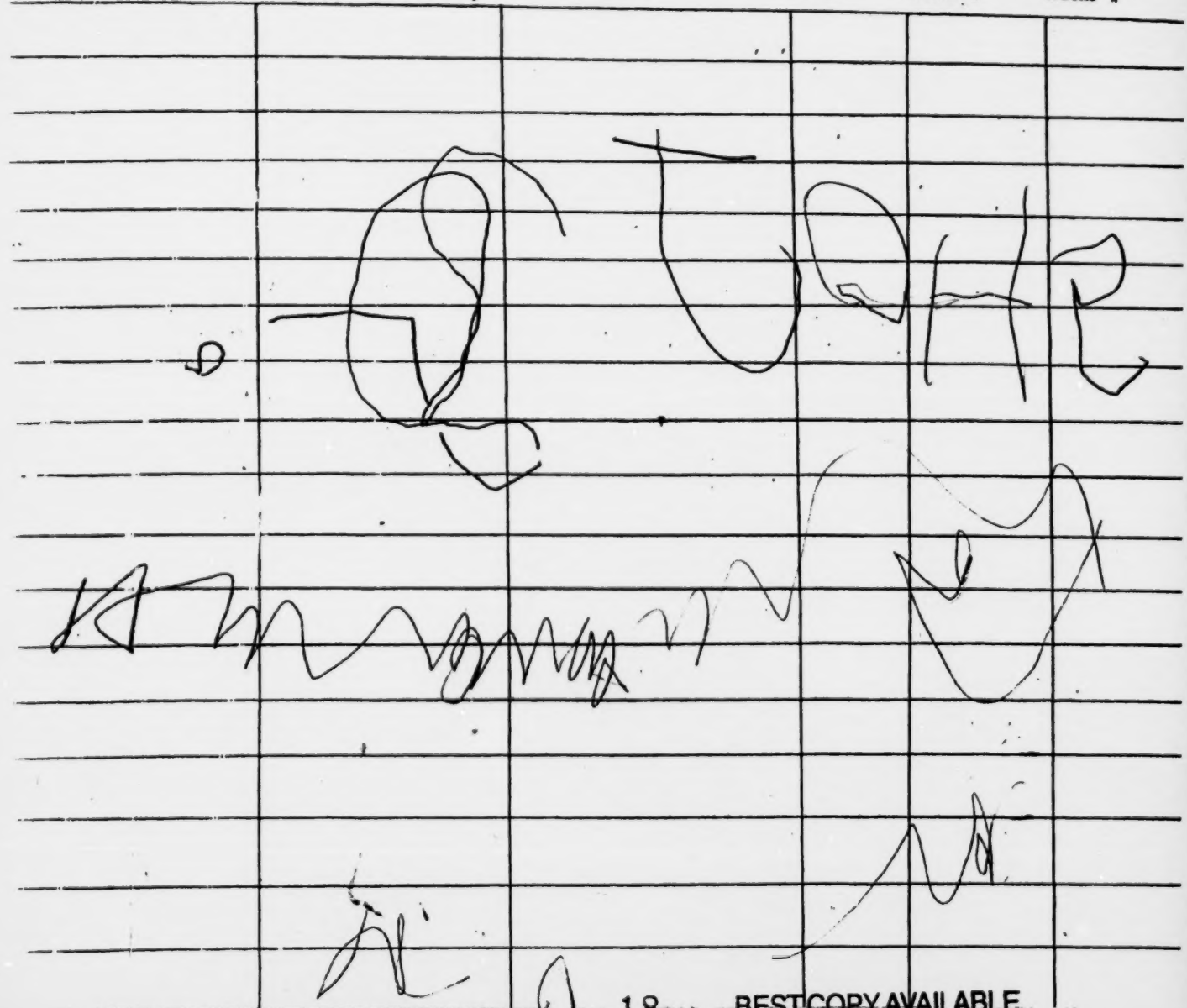

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